

**Elders:**

Rufus Barfield \* Dan Jackson \* Donnie McDaniel

**Deacons:**

Paul Byas \* Chris Gorham \* Rhett Moeller \* Michael Myrick \* Sheldon Smith

**Evangelist:**

Antoine Holloway

**Worship Times:**

Sunday Bible Study/9:30AM      Sunday Morning Worship/10:30AM

Sunday Evening Worship/6:00PM      Wednesday Bible Study/7:30PM

**Meetings:**

**Men's Leadership Class**

December 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 9:00am

**Saturday Evangelism Class**

January 5<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00am

**Elders/Deacons Meeting**

December 30<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00pm

**Women's Thursday Bible Study**

March 21<sup>st</sup> @ 7:00pm

**2013 Spring Gospel Meeting w/ Ethan Longhenry of Venice, California**

April 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2013

**2013 Vacation Bible School w/ David Graham of Cincinnati, Ohio**

June 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2013

THEME: TBA

**2013 Fall Gospel Meeting w/ Larry Wright of Savannah, Georgia**

October 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**Prayer Requests (Health Problems & Sick Presently)**

Judy Anderson \* Thelma Findley \* Virginia Fowler \* JoAnn Harrison \*  
Andrew Madison \* Bruce McDonald \* Janet Ostroff \* Isaac Parker \* Earl  
Sellers \* Lewis & Anne Wise

**Prayer Request (Unable To Attend Services Here)**

Anne Harrison \* Steven Chung \* Bruce McDonald \* Carlos Vargas

**Prayer Request (Traveling)**

**Additional Announcements**

- Song Practice Today @ 5:00pm
- **Phillip Mullins** (Evangelist, Dulles church of Christ) will be our guest speaker this evening.
- **Congregational Report Meeting** – January 20<sup>th</sup> @ 5pm
- Leadership Class (Leading in Communication & LS Training)

**Contribution & Attendance Figures**

December 9 <sup>th</sup>	\$5,618-Contribution	129-Attendance
December 2 <sup>nd</sup>	\$5,998-Contribution	128-Attendance

**WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?**

Hear The Gospel (Acts 15:7) \* Believe In Jesus (Acts 8:12) \* Repent Of Our Sins (Acts 3:19) \* Confess Christ To Be The Son Of God (Acts 8:37)  
\* Be Baptized In Water (Acts 22:16) \* Remain Faithful (Acts 2:42)

**TODAY'S DATE: December 16, 2012**

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**"A Going Church For A Coming Lord, Which Does  
All The Lord Authorizes" – Romans 16:16**

# Honoring Love



***I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine (Song of Solomon 6:3a) & I am my beloved's; And his desire is toward me (Song of Solomon 7:10).***

What are we to make of the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's (cf. Song of Solomon 1:1)?

All of the New Testament books are about Jesus and how to live in His Kingdom. The "history" books of the Old Testament tell us about the Israelites and God's work among them, the books of prophecy present the messages of God to His people, the Psalms give voice to the one who would honor, praise, and glorify God, and Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes grapple with the realities of life, how to live wisely, and why people should serve the LORD no matter what their circumstances. Well and good; we understand why these books are in the Bible. Yet the Song of Solomon is unlike all of these.

For years many justified the Song of Solomon as Scripture, not on the basis of its literal meaning, but as an allegory: among Jews, as a love song between God and His people Israel, and among Christians, as a love song between Christ and the church. Yet such an interpretation seems quite forced: the lovers are clearly a young man and a young woman, and their descriptions of each other and their desires is the language of youthful, desirous love. While it is true that Israel is often portrayed as God's wife (cf. Ezekiel 16:1-63, Hosea 1:1-3:5), and the church is portrayed as the Bride of Christ (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33), the metaphorical images describing those relationships are not taken as far as we see portrayed in the Song of Solomon.

The best understanding of the Song of Solomon is to understand it at its surface level: it is a song expressing the love and desire of a young man and a young woman toward each other, giving voice to lovers for each other. Love songs were common in the ancient Near Eastern world: we have many similar songs preserved from Egypt as well. For that matter, love songs have been popular throughout time: expressing love and desire for one of the opposite sex has been a primary theme for musicians and songwriters to this very day.

The presence of the Song of Solomon in Scripture demonstrates that the "secular" and "spiritual" divide which marks much of modern thought does not reflect reality. The God of the Bible remains God in terms of secular interests and matters as much as in spiritual interests and matters.

In the Song of Solomon, God honors the love and desire between the young man and the young woman. When love, desire, and sexuality are discussed in Scripture and among Christians, it is very often in negative terms, prohibiting all sorts of sexual behavior. Many people focus on the negative and have come away with the impression that romantic love and sexuality are intrinsically impure and "dirty," and cannot imagine that such things can honor or glorify God. Such negativity is a distressing distortion of what God is trying to communicate in the Bible, for all of the sexual prohibitions and guidelines are actually meant to honor and sanctify the proper exercise of romantic love and sexuality in marriage.

So the refrain goes in the Song of Solomon: the woman declares that she belongs to her beloved, and her beloved is hers, and his desire is for her (Song of Solomon 6:3, 7:10). This is the relationship which can honor God: marriage is honorable, and its bed undefiled (Hebrews 13:4). God, in fact, made man so that he would cling to his wife and the two would become one flesh (Genesis 2:24; cf. Matthew 19:4-6). For generations, the Song of Solomon has given a voice for young men and women to express their love for one another, finding an opportunity to see their own love story in terms of the young man and young woman of the Song.

What makes the Song of Solomon more "interesting" or scandalous for people today is different from what made it distinctive in the past. In modern American culture we tend to take marrying for love for granted; in the ancient world, the decision of who would marry whom was most often left to parents trying to make family mergers that made good social and economic sense (as is done in many parts of the world to this day). Marrying for love did not happen as often; most couples would have to learn to love each other after their commitment and consummation.

The Song of Solomon has always been somewhat scandalous and a stumbling-block for some, but it need not be. God is able to glory in pure love and romance between a young man and a young woman. In fact, it is when "my beloved is mine" and "I am his/hers" that this love and romance can truly blossom. All married couples are called to find enjoyment in each other, for a man to "rejoice in the wife of his youth," and his wife likewise rejoice in her husband, no matter what the circumstances (cf. Proverbs 5:18-19). Such lasting love honors and glorifies God who is love and who is one in relationship within Himself. Let us then understand the value of the Song of Solomon, and for those of us who are married, share in love and romance with our spouse!

- ***Ethan R. Longhenry***